

Please amend the above-identified application as follows. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) An article having on at least a portion of its surface, a coating of a thin transition layer consisting of a metal bearing material and having a composition that varies from an exterior first composition comprising a purely metal to a second composition beneath the exterior first composition, which transition layer is superimposed on a metal bearing color layer and is substantially transparent and colorless to visible light.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which one or more intermediate layers are interposed between the transition layer and the metal bearing color layer, said intermediate layer(s) being colorless, transparent, and less than 400 Å in thickness.

4. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the first composition is a non-precious refractory metal chosen from the group consisting of Ti, Zr or Hf, or an alloy thereof.

5. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the first composition is a noble metal chosen from the group consisting of gold, silver, platinum, platinum group metals, or an alloy thereof.

6. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the first composition is a corrosion resistant metal chosen from the group consisting of chromium or stainless steel, or an alloy thereof.

7. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which the metal bearing color layer has the same composition as the second composition in the transition layer.

8. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which the composition of the metal bearing color layer is chosen from one or more of Zr, Ti, Hf, C and N.

9. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which the first composition is zirconium metal and the second composition is chosen from one or more of Zr, Ti, Hf, C and N.

10. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the transition layer is deposited by a PVD process.

11. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which the metal bearing color layer is deposited by a PVD process.

12. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the transition between the first composition and the second composition of the transition layer is smooth.

13. (original) The article of claim 1 in which the transition between the first composition and the second composition of the transition layer is in discrete steps.

14. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 in which the first composition of the transition layer provides corrosion resistance.

15. (previously presented) An article of manufacture having on at least a portion of its surface a thin transition layer consisting of a metal bearing material having a composition that varies from a first exterior composition to a second composition beneath the exterior composition and in which the first composition provides corrosion protection, and the second composition determines the visible color of that portion of the article surface to which the transition layer is applied.

16. (original) The article of claim 15 in which the transition layer is superimposed on a metal bearing color layer and the second composition of the transition layer is essentially transparent.

17. (canceled)

18. (previously presented) The article of claim 1 wherein the transition layer has a thickness of about 150 Å or less.